



Education Watch

Enhancing Flexibility & Accountability ■ Leaving No Child Behind

U.S. House Education & the Workforce Committee ■ John Boehner, Chairman
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Congress Kicks Into High Gear on Education Reform

Next week will bring a burst of renewed activity in Congress on President Bush's education reform plan. House and Senate negotiators, led by Rep. John Boehner (R-OH), Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH), and Rep. George Miller (D-CA), met Thursday and agreed to move forward with an ambitious schedule of meetings next week in hopes of responding to the President's charge to deliver a final bill quickly for teachers, parents and students.

Coinciding with White House Reading Week, conferees are expected to ratify agreements on President Bush's Reading First initiative as well as a host of other issues hammered out in August. Intensive discussions are also anticipated on remaining issues and negotiators are prepared to finalize a bill that is true to the President's principles: accountability, flexibility and local control, expanded parental options, and funding for what works.

In addition, the House Education committee will hold a hearing Wednesday on IDEA reform and concerns about the overidentification of students for special education, featuring testimony by Secretary Rod Paige. Some children are being diagnosed as needing IDEA services simply because they did not receive proper early reading instruction. Congress will take a major step to improve early learning opportunities for disadvantaged children by ratifying President Bush's Reading First initiatives next week.

Finally, members of Congress are also being encouraged to visit classrooms next week to read to students and emphasize the importance of scientifically-based reading instruction programs, mirroring a nationwide effort by members of the President's Cabinet.

Message of the Day

Conferees have agreed to move quickly to finalize President Bush's education reform plan.

- ❑ *The President's plan targets funding increases to students who need it the most, expands local decision-making flexibility, and streamlines bureaucracy.*
- ❑ *The Bush proposal focuses on effective, proven methods of reading instruction based on scientific research.*
- ❑ *Real accountability is essential if we are going to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers.*
- ❑ *We have a moral obligation to address 35 years of failed federal education policy. The status quo must end.*

DAILY EDUCATION FACTS

- A recent University of Michigan study found that more than 20 percent of U.S. first-graders have severe reading difficulties. Of those children, nearly 3 in 4 are likely to remain poor readers. More than 10 million American children have trouble reading, the study found. (Laurence McQuillan, *USA Today*, July 26, 2001)
- Under H.R. 1, states participating in the Reading First program will have the option to receive "Early Reading First" funding to implement proven, research-based reading programs in Head Start and existing pre-school programs.
- On the 1998 NAEP, 73 percent of white students performed at or above the basic level in 4th grade reading, compared with just 40 percent of Hispanic students and only 36 percent of African American students.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Our students do not need adults who measure success by spending dollars, or who measure success by compliance achieved with regulations and red tape. Our children don't need adults who make excuses for their failures. Our children need adults who focus upon results. ... And anything that detracts from their learning is a detraction from the school's mission." -- Education Secretary Rod Paige, September 4, 2001